

I kept the water in the tank for 30 minutes to replicate high tide on the saltmarsh, before gradually lifting the tray of *Puccinellia* and the moths out of the tank. The moths appeared to be unharmed by the experience, although of course the submergence may have reduced their life expectancy.— ADRIAN SPALDING, Tremayne Farm Cottage, Praze-an-Beeble, Camborne, Cornwall.

Common Rustic *Mesapamea secalis* (L.) egg-laying on Sand Couch-grass *Elytrigia juncea*

I came across a female *Mesapamea* species laying eggs on Sand Couch-grass *Elytrigia juncea* close to the sea on Loe Bar, Cornwall, on 19 August 2005. Examination of the grass stem showed that 8 eggs had been laid on the inside surface of a sheath above the first stem node above ground level. Genitalia examination showed that the moth was in fact Common Rustic *Mesapamea secalis* (L.). I can find no other record of this foodplant for *M. secalis*. Emmet (1991. Chart showing the Life History and Habitats of the British Lepidoptera. In A.M. Emmet & J. Heath. in *The moths and butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*. Harley Books. Colchester) gives grasses (Gramineae) as well as *Luzula pilosa*, although Crafer (2005. *Foodplant List for the Caterpillars of Britain's Butterflies and Larger Moths*. Atropos Publishing. Meltham.) lists *M. secalis* as feeding generally from *Elytrigia* sp., as well as from *Holcus mollis*, *Festuca pratensis*, *F. ovina*, *F. arundinacea* and *Deschampsia cespitosa*. (Crafer's list may include foodplants used in captive breeding or on the continent).— ADRIAN SPALDING, Tremayne Farm Cottage, Praze-an-Beeble, Camborne, Cornwall TR14 9PH.

Six-metre grass margins and butterflies

A joint project between Butterfly Conservation (Cambridgeshire and Essex Branch), NIAB and RSPB started at the RSPB farm in Cambridgeshire in Spring 2004 and aims to find out whether standard grass margins, that tend to be dominated by vigorous species such as Cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata*, can be made more attractive to a range of common grassland butterflies. A set of 50 metre long margin experiments were set up to explore the impact of adding flowering plants and comparing the effects of using wild and cultivated seed. Six replicates of four different treatments, native grasses, native grasses with native wildflowers, cultivar grasses, and cultivar grasses with cultivars of wildflowers, were established in the spring of 2004 with monitoring taking place from the Spring of 2005. Adult butterfly numbers were counted using the transect method four times a week, when possible, during the peak flight period of June to the end of July. Far more butterflies were observed on the native grasses and wildflower margins (Table 1) than on any of the other treatments.

Table 1. Adult butterfly numbers summer 2005.

Butterflies	native grasses	native grasses & wild flowers	grass cultivars	grass cultivars & wild flowers
All species	192	884	179	223
<i>Maniola jurtina</i> Meadow brown	71	353	63	69
<i>Aphantopus hyperanthus</i> Ringlet	35	74	26	22
<i>Thymelicus sylvestris/lineola</i> Small & Essex Skipper	7	36	16	6
<i>Ochlodes faunus</i> Large skipper	5	32	6	8
<i>Pieris brassicae</i> Large white	5	70	6	9
<i>Pieris rapae</i> Small white	57	185	56	85
<i>Pieris napi</i> Green-veined white	3	59	2	6
<i>Aglais urticae</i> Small tortoiseshell	2	62	1	6

Other related trials at the RSPB Farm include sets of replicated 10 x 6 metre margin plots sown with either *Dactylis glomerata* or Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, designed to compare different varieties of these species. The single varieties of grass (either cultivated or native) were sown with a 20% admixture of *Trifolium pratense*, *Leucanthemum vulgare* and knapweed *Centaurea* spp. to attract butterflies and to determine the interaction between the grasses and broad-leaved plants.

Monitoring started last spring with night-time searches for feeding caterpillars and then observation of adult butterflies and vegetation structure during the summer flight period. Further work is required before any conclusions can be drawn from these trials, however DNA studies show clear differences between the two cultivated *Festuca* spp. varieties and between cultivated and wild material. In turn, these different varieties influence the number of flowers produced by the broad-leaved plants, which appears to affect adult butterfly number. Thus the species of grass has a considerable effect on butterfly numbers with almost twice as many adults recorded on average on *Festuca* compared with *Dactylis*.

It is hoped that further monitoring will take place for the next two years and anybody interested in helping especially with the evening larval searches should contact me.— ROBIN FIELD, 166 Sherwood Avenue, Northampton, NN2 8TE, e-mail rfield8633@aol.com.

Red-tipped Clearwing *Synanthedon formicaeformis* (Esp.) (Lep.: Sesiidae) rediscovered at Borough Fen Decoy, Northamptonshire, with nearby records from Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire

On 28 June 2004, I visited Borough Fen Duck Decoy near Newborough, Northamptonshire (O. S. grid reference TF 200080; VC 32), with some pheromone lures to follow up a record of the Red-tipped Clearwing *S. formicaeformis*. The species was discovered and last observed there by the late Rick Pilcher in 1975 and is listed in his book about the Decoy (Cook & Pilcher, 1982. *The history of Borough Fen Decoy*. Providence. Ely.). The lures were MYO, TIP & VESP, as supplied by the Dutch Plant Research International in 2001. I am delighted to report that a single fresh individual of the Red-tipped Clearwing turned up to my lures at 15.30 hours, when I suspended them against the trunk of a fallen Crack Willow tree *Salix fragilis* by one of the arms of the decoy, near the centre of the site. The moth settled briefly on a sunny patch on the trunk by two of the lures, which I was using in combination because I did not have one specifically for the Red-tipped Clearwing. I had removed the MYO lure by this stage. I have used the combination of three lures successfully to detect the Red-tipped Clearwing in the past but find the species pays only a fleeting interest, unlike the more sustained attention paid by some species of clearwing to other pheromone lures (e.g. Waring, 2001b, c, 2004). The moth at the Decoy flitted off within a few seconds, flew past the lure and was not seen again. Quite a strong breeze was moving the leaves on the trees and the vegetation was dry. It is of interest to report that in the previous half hour I had tried the three lures in two other positions on the site, less than 100m away, both by a Crack Willow, in similar weather, without success. The moths reported by Waring & Wright (2003. *Br. J. ent. Nat. Hist.* **16**: 258-262) arrived at 13.55 hours, so my efforts at the Decoy had not started too early in the day however. I had also tried briefly at the Decoy without any success on the afternoon of 23 June 2004. Most of the willows on the site are Crack Willow but I have also seen Grey Willow *S. cinerea* near the capture site. I hope this experience may help and encourage others searching for this moth to find it successfully. From the records below, I would suggest that I was very early in the flight season.

The following information shows the significance of this new record. Rick Pilcher's record was the last of the few Northamptonshire records which the County Macro-moth Recorder for Northamptonshire, John Ward (pers. comm.), had on his files at the start of 2004. It transpires that my 2004 record was the first in the county for 29 years and only the second in 114 years! The status, distribution and records of